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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TBILISI 001554

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR GEORGIA MONITORING GROUP AND EUR/CARC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/08/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [RU](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: GEORGIA: SITREP 29: UN ASSISTANCE CONVOY GAINS
ACCESS TO RUSSIAN-CONTROLLED AREAS

REF: TBILISI 1550

Classified By: AMBASSADOR JOHN F. TEFFT FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) Summary. The UN announced that a humanitarian assistance convoy was allowed to pass the Georgian checkpoint at Karaleti September 11, delivering four tons of assistance to the Georgian village of Patara Garadjivari. Georgia's Reintegration Minister formally announced a freeze on development projects in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. President Saakashvili stated his readiness to share some powers with the Anti-Crisis Council and accepted responsibility for the events leading up to the Russian aggression. OSCE monitors heard from Russian troops outside Poti that they planned to withdraw September 14, although Post has heard conflicting reports on actual moves toward departure. Georgia has lifted some restrictions on Russian websites in Georgia, but continues to block major Russian news agencies. Former Minister of Defense, Irakli Okruashvili, will not be extradited to Georgia from France. End Summary.

UN HUMANITARIAN CONVOY GETS THROUGH CHECKPOINTS

12. (U) After being blocked for 15 days in a row, a UN convoy containing four tons of humanitarian supplies was permitted to enter the Russian-controlled area in Georgia proper north of Gori on September 11. The assistance was delivered to the ethnic Georgian village of Patara Garadjivari. According to the UN, many of the village's 1500 residents have already returned.

GOVERNMENT FREEZES DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN REGIONS

13. (SBU) Post received a copy of a letter from Minister for Reintegration Yakobashvili, also sent to other implementing partners, announcing a decision by the government to "freeze indefinitely all rehabilitation and economic development projects that are already running in (Abkhazia and South Ossetia)." It seems to suggest that such programs could resume in some form in the future, stating that the Ministry will review such programs to determine their "applicability against declared goals in the current situation." It makes clear that for now, however, partners must tread carefully: "Any attempt from international governmental and/or nongovernmental organizations, State and private companies to legitimize criminal regimes in Sokhumi and Tskhinvali through cooperation and engagement with them by avoiding the Georgian Government will be considered as an utmost unfriendly step and will bear consequences according to Georgian legislation and international law." A copy of the letter has been sent to EUR/CARC.

SAAKASHVILI TAKES STEPS ON DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE

14. (SBU) Press reports indicate President Saakashvili has instructed Interior Minister Merabishvili to oversee post-conflict reconstruction projects, but claimed the Anti-Crisis Council should be the major decision-making body.

Saakashvili is ready to give executive powers to the Council, including the right to sign documents. Saakashvili claimed the Council could send representatives to various ministries to rebuild the country together and show the aggressors that Georgia is united and effective. He expressed the hope that about 20,000 displaced persons would be able to return back to their homes in the areas north of Gori after the Russian troops withdraw within a month. Saakashvili also accepted full responsibility for the events that led Georgia to its current situation. "I want to state with full responsibility that I am personally responsible and I assume full personal responsibility for each and every event that led us to and which preceded the Russian aggression against Georgia. I also assume full personal responsibility for rebuilding and establishing peace in Georgia," he stated at a meeting with the local administration in the town of Gori.

RUSSIAN TROOPS TO LEAVE POTI SEPTEMBER 14

15. (SBU) An OSCE patrol traveled along the main east-west highway all the way to Poti September 10, encountering no difficulties. They spoke with Russian forces at the three checkpoints outside Poti, hearing at one that Russian forces were planning to depart all three on Sunday, September 14.

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The same patrol visited a Georgian airbase in Senaki, where Georgian forces reported more unexploded ordnance, such as missiles and grenades, than originally thought, with cleanup underway.

16. (SBU) According to media sources, Russian occupying forces have begun dismantling wire entanglements around the checkpoints in Khobi, Samegrelo region and in Poti. Four empty trucks were also driven to the Teklati checkpoint to remove alleged stolen goods. However, the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs claims that as of September 8, these checkpoints had been reinforced. UNOMIG sources have not yet been able to confirm any concrete progress on departure.

17. (SBU) The OSCE successfully passed Russian checkpoints outside South Ossetia again on September 11, reaching villages a few kilometers south of Tskhinvali.

GEORGIA EASES RESTRICTIONS ON RUSSIAN WEBSITES

18. (SBU) According to the press, Georgia unblocked websites on the .ru domain on 9 September, but restrictions on some websites remain. Russian television news stations such as Itar-Tass, RIA Novosti, and Interfax remain blocked. They are still available and accessible on satellite, although most viewers in Georgia view them through cable.

OKRUASHVILI'S APPEAL TO AVOID EXTRADITION UPHELD

19. (SBU) The press reported that former Georgian Defense Minister Irakli Okruashvili and his lawyers welcomed the French appellate court's decision not to extradite him to Georgia. Okruashvili was sentenced in absentia to eleven years in prison on corruption charges accusing him of abuse of office, negligence, and money laundering.

TEFFT